
CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

Title: UPDATE AND FORWARD LOOK

Prepared by: Douglas Stewart, Outdoor Access Officer

Purpose: This paper provides an update on the main areas of work both undertaken and planned towards delivery of the five year outcomes in the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan.

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN.

Long term outcome: People enjoying the Park through outstanding visitor and learning experiences

Priority 5 - Active Cairngorms

1. Active Aviemore

Project to develop non-motorised access provision for the proposed new hospital in Aviemore and wider community.

- a. The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) is working in partnership with Aviemore & Vicinity Community Council, Hitrans, The Highland Council, Sustrans and NHS Highland to encourage residents and visitors to Badenoch and Strathspey to be more physically active outdoors.
- b. Phase 1: Feasibility and preliminary design report completed. Full report at: <http://cairngorms.co.uk/caring-future/developing-park-access/activeaviemore/>
- c. Phase 2: Detailed design funding of £175,000 will be sought from Sustrans Community Links Fund from 2019-20 onwards.
- d. New Aviemore hospital planning application has been submitted to the Highland Council and 'called in' by CNPA

2. Wee Walks Week 2018

Wee Walks Week took place over the period 3rd to 9th September with public involvement via a pledge to walk any distance from 1 mile upwards and as many walks as desired by filling out a simple form. Wee Walks Week is promoted via social media platforms and the CNPA website.

The objective is to raise awareness of the need to be physically active every day and to celebrate those using short walks to improve health outcomes. In the lead up to and over the course of Wee Walks Week the public are encouraged to pledge to walk

stating how many miles they intend cover and how many will be walking with them. They are encouraged to take a Wee Walk by either:

- a. Joining a health walk group:
- b. Undertaking a walk in one of the Community Path Leaflets;
- c. Undertaking their own walk.

In 2018 the event timing was close of the Europarc Conference and it was acknowledged that media activity and profile would be reduced as a result therefore the focussed shifted to maintaining profile and engagement rather that attempt to reach new audiences.

This was the first year Instagram was used in the campaign, while reaching a smaller audience, overall the level of engagement was higher (8%) and demonstrates the potential Instagram may have for the future Wee Walks Week.

This year engagement from schools increased with 7 schools pledging involvement resulting in a total of 234 pupils taking part in activities ranging from the daily mile to geography field trips. Whilst mileage was not recorded it is estimated that at least 800 miles were walked. The overall mileage total for Wee Walks Week 2018 was **1387**.

3. Active Cairngorms Health Walks/Volunteer Cairngorms

- a. This three year pilot programme to support and develop environmental volunteering in the Cairngorms National Park is now heading towards the final year. The overall success of the programme is widely acknowledged and careful consideration will be given to the future of the programme. Priorities this year included piloting 'Dementia Friendly' accreditation involving Health Walk Groups in the Badenoch and Strathspey area, and ensuring that the current Health Walk groups remain sustainable and are supported to continue their activities.
- b. Volunteer Rangers recruited as part of the programme continue to support 6 Ranger Services across the Park carrying out a wide range of activities. An online portal is live at www.cairngorms.co.uk/volunteers highlighting current opportunities to volunteer for nature and the environment across the National Park area. If you wish to know more or a have questions please contact CNPA Volunteer Co-ordinator, Mike Woolvin, MikeWoolvin@cairngorms.co.uk.

4. Community Path Leaflets

- a. Ballater Community Paths Leaflet has now been reprinted with input from the Ballater community. The update and revision included a review of the route descriptions in light of the recently launched path grading system.
- b. Badenoch and Strathspey Paths with Easy Access Guide has been reprinted with updates and amendments.

Priority 4 - Visitor Infrastructure & Information

Management of core paths and outdoor access:

5. Long Distance Paths (LDR's)

- a. **New Strategic Routes Development Officer** has been recruited by CNPA. This new 2 year fixed term post will manage the Park's strategic path developments. Post is match funded by CNPA and SNH. Abi Ball takes up the post on 3rd December 2018. Abi is currently employed as a rural surveyor with RSPB Scotland.
- b. **Deeside Way Extension** – Planning application for the section from Invercauld Bridge to Braemar has been submitted to Aberdeenshire Council and 'called in' by CNPA.
- c. **Speyside Way Extension** - Construction of the Ardgeal (Kincaig) to Inshriach section has commenced and will be completed by end December 2018. Funding totalling £293,000 has been awarded (ERDF/CNPA) to construct the section from Tromie to Ruthven. Planning permission has been approved for the section from Tromie Bridge to Insh Marshes. The section from Insh Marshes to Ruthven will be considered at the December 2018 planning committee.
- d. **Upholding Access Rights** – Access casework continues to be reported and processed according to agreed protocols. Since the last LOAF meeting a small number of new cases have been logged and are being processed. We are currently testing a new, more comprehensive system of case work logging which aims to improve records and response timescales. An update will be given under Agenda Item 8.

Other National Park Initiatives/Matters

6. Mountain Paths

Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust managed HLF and partner funded (CNPA, LL&TNPA, FCS, SNH) project 'The Mountains and the People' is now well into the second half of the funded project and continues to upgrade and improve key mountain paths in Aberdeenshire, Angus, Perth and Drumochter as well as Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. Further details available of current activities are available at the project website: <http://themountainsandthepeople.org.uk/>

8. HLF Tomintoul / Glenlivet Landscape Partnership Project

The project website at <http://tgdt.org.uk/tomintoul-glenlivet-development-trust/current-projects/landscapepartnership/> provides details of the project and its objectives. The project has reached the midway point and the access project outputs which include improving the Tomintoul Spur (Speyside Way) and a new low level path linking Glenlivet

Distillery and Blairfindy Castle are now underway with detailed construction tenders being drawn up for issue in early 2019. Physical works are due to begin early summer 2019 for completion in the autumn. The Access Project delivery budget is £360k.

9. A9 Dualling

All 'Stage 3' EIA consultation responses have now been submitted to Transport Scotland and overall the range of 'solutions' proposed to cater for changes to non-motorised access conditions are well designed. The Dalwhinnie to Crubenmore and Dalraddy to Slochd sections are the most recent and last in the series of responses.

Members will be aware of the issues which have arisen relating to NMU provision within the Dalraddy to Slochd Project - a marked deviation from the overall high standard. An update on this will be given under Agenda Item 5.

10. Cairngorms Capercaillie Framework HLF Project

The Heritage Lottery Fund has now formally committed £346,500 towards the 18 month development phase of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project with a further £2.25million potentially available for the delivery phase.

The five-year project will focus on two main areas; providing suitable, improved habitat for capercaillie together with engaging and involving the public in the future survival of the species. Carrbridge has been chosen as a pilot community and local residents will have a major say on key elements of the project development, helping to work up practical ideas to be tried and tested with successful initiatives being replicated throughout the National Park in the future.

A full news announcement has been posted on the CNPA website: see <http://cairngorms.co.uk/lottery-win-capercaillie/>

Douglas Stewart
Outdoor Access Officer
douglasstewart@cairngorms.co.uk